

REMARKS

Applicants submit this Amendment in reply to the Office Action mailed December 28, 2005.

As an initial matter, Applicants appreciate the Examiner's indication of the allowability of the subject matter of claims 31-36, 40-42, 47, 49-51 and 54-56. Applicants have amended independent claim 30 to include the subject matter of dependent claim 31 indicated as being allowable, cancelled dependent claim 31, and changed the dependencies of claims 32 and 33 from claim 31 to claim 30. Accordingly, independent claim 30, and its dependent claims 32-56 are all in prima facie condition for allowance.

Before entry of this Amendment, claims 30-56 were pending in this application. After entry of this Amendment, claims 30 and 32-56 are pending in this application. Claim 30 is the sole independent claim.

On pages 2-5 of the Office Action, claims 30, 37-39, 43, and 48 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(3) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2004/0233363 to Murayama et al. ("Murayama"); claims 44-46 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Murayama in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,747,121 to Okazaki et al. ("Okazaki"); claim 52 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Murayama in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,493,053 to Miyachi et al. ("Miyachi"); and claim 53 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Murayama in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,081,312 to Aminaka et al. ("Aminaka").

Claims 37-39, 43-46, 48, and 52-53 now depend, either directly or indirectly, from the allowable subject matter of claim 31, rendering the rejection of those claims moot. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the Section 102(e) and 103(a) rejections.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and reexamination of this application and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

The Office Action contains characterizations of the claims and the related art with which Applicants do not necessarily agree. Unless expressly noted otherwise, Applicants decline to subscribe to any statement or characterization in the Office Action.

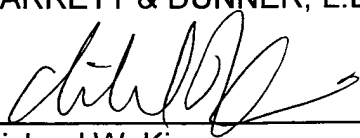
In discussing the claims in this Amendment, it is to be understood that Applicants are in no way intending to limit the scope of the claims to any exemplary embodiments described in the specification or abstract and/or shown in the drawings. Rather, Applicants are entitled to have the claims interpreted broadly, to the maximum extent permitted by statute, regulation, and applicable case law.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this Amendment and charge any additional required fees to our Deposit Account No. 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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